

U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



www.cardin.senate.gov



[@SenatorCardin](https://twitter.com/SenatorCardin)



[SenatorBenCardin](https://www.facebook.com/SenatorBenCardin)



[@senatorcardin](https://www.instagram.com/senatorcardin)

December 11, 2021

Dear Fellow Marylanders:

Last December, the nation was celebrating the incredible news that COVID-19 vaccines for adults were approved and ready for distribution. Less than a year later, more than [237 million Americans](#) age 5 and up have received a COVID-19 vaccine. That's just over 71 percent of the population. It includes over 4 million Marylanders who have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

New this week is that the [CDC is now recommending](#) booster shots, for everyone 16 and older, which have been shown to lessen the impact of emergent variants and increase immunity levels that waned over time.

Despite the progress we have made with vaccinations, more than a quarter of a million Marylanders [have not gone back to get their second dose](#) of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, which start with a two-dose shot. Nationwide, only about 24 percent of people have been fully vaccinated and obtained a booster dose.

It is an understatement to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for our communities. This has been a tough two years. Though we hoped we would be back to a more normal holiday season for 2021, the delta variant and, potentially, omicron are prolonging the pandemic.

We are still learning about omicron, but information so far suggests it is [4.2 times more transmissible](#) in its early stage than delta, although perhaps the cases are overall mild. Scientists expect to share more data soon.

This week, [925 Marylanders are hospitalized](#) with COVID-19, which is the highest number of COVID-19 patients since early May. Over 200 of those Marylanders are in intensive care. The majority of patients are unvaccinated, a trend that has remained unchanged since vaccines became widely available.

Even with greater access to vaccines, more than 790,000 people have died of the coronavirus in the United States so far and [over 5 million globally](#). In Maryland, similar to national trends, most deaths are among the unvaccinated.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), unvaccinated individuals are [10 to 15 times more likely to be hospitalized](#) due to COVID-19 infections, and [14 times more likely to die](#) from COVID-related complications. COVID-19 remains [one of the leading causes of death](#) in the U.S.

If not for the leadership of the Biden administration in the success and expanse of the vaccination campaign, [HHS estimated](#) among Medicare beneficiaries approximately an additional 265,000 COVID-19 infections, 107,000 hospitalizations, and 39,000 deaths due to COVID-19. The Biden administration continues to push for vaccinations, including working with pediatricians to administer doses among newly eligible 5- to 11 year-olds. And the Build Back Better Act includes \$10 billion in potential new funding to build on previous efforts to continue bolstering our domestic and international pandemic preparedness.

As the cold weather sets in and more in-person, indoor gatherings occur, I urge you to get vaccinated, including a booster if you are eligible. CDC guidelines for boosters recommend the third (or second) shot 6 months after your initial vaccine series for two-dose vaccines or 2 months later for single-dose vaccines. If you still have questions about the vaccine or would like to get your shot, talk to your doctor, local pharmacist or visit <https://www.vaccines.gov/>.

I know it is hard to keep up your vigilance for such a long period of time. And it can be frustrating to see others wholly disregard the basic safety protocols that can make a real difference in keeping you and your loved ones safe. But please keep at it – wash your hands frequently, wear a mask (properly) when you are in large, indoor groups or places where you don't know the vaccine status of those around you, and try to take it outside, if the weather permits.

And please, when you are eligible, get a booster shot to make sure you protect yourself and loved ones from the emerging variants and to mitigate potential waning immunity. It's also okay to be struggling from a mental health standpoint, as many of us are, so talk to your primary care provider if you need help. You are not alone.

Finally, if you think you are getting worn down by COVID-19 precautions, think of our healthcare and other essential workers who have been overwhelmed since the start of this pandemic. Those who have been on the front lines day in and day out, putting themselves and their families at risk while they willingly care for the sick and hold the hands of those dying alone because their families could not visit, deserve our [praise and immense thanks](#).

Thank you for all you have done to keep our communities safe. Stay well.

Ben
Ben Cardin